

**Transcript of comments from
Samuel Elton Jones¹**

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**Regarding TRS (Telecommunications Relay Service)
VRS (Video Relay Service)**

Federal Communications Commission
Office of the Secretary

Throughout this document:

[brackets] indicate transcriber comments or notations added to clarify meaning
{curly brackets} indicate uncertain translations
{*curly brackets with italicized type*} indicate unintelligible passages; text represents
English glosses of signs seen

Helen Chang, Hello! I hope you will be able to "read" me. I wore dark clothes {and am filming} in my room now.

Ready to read? I promised you -- remember? -- when I talked with you at the booth this past May. I meant it, so here it is.

So, I'm ready, and let's begin...

August 26, 2003. My name is Samuel Elton Jones. I live in Silver Spring, MD.

Now, I am in my house. {I'm not using a number of things to...}

But I want to first focus on the VRS part of TRS. I want to complain about the FCC cutting funding. I have several complaints I want to bring up about things that have happened related to Docket 98-67, about Video Relay Service or VRI [*sic*].

I have complaints about the cut for several reasons. One is the problem with timing. It's an important issue I will summarize -- you can read about it if you want a more in-depth explanation. This is a short explanation about the problem with timing and hearing people all over the USA. Our country has faced many changes and will have to face many more in the future. We deaf workers are not aware that hearing people have had to work faster and faster.

¹ Comments were submitted in sign language on videotape. The videotape was hand delivered to the FCC on Wednesday, August 26, 2003.

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It's like with cars. You used to be able to wait for a ride, get in without hurrying, and calmly drive away. Now, cars zoom past so fast they're gone before you know it.

The problem with cutting VRS is that it means having to wait and wait to get services. Waiting, etc. causes trouble because we can't keep up with hearing people because we are not moving at the same speed they are. That's the last straw. That we CAN do it, that's the last straw.

How did I become aware of the "timing" issue? What happened is that a few years ago, the Maryland state government, in cooperation with CSD and Sprint, set-up an improved experiment to draw all deaf people... all deaf workers to use VRS. That lasted for 6 months. When I first went to try their services, of course, there were technical problems – the line would go down, the system would freeze, you couldn't dial through, ISDN problems. We had ongoing trouble for the 6 months, so they extended it another 3 months. One of [my experiences during] the extension I'll never forget that day. I was working at the Potomac Electric Power Co. One day I skipped out at lunch time to go to the BIS office to use VRS. I called the Texas service which connected me with a secretary named Bob (a man that I know). We chatted and he asked me if I wanted to speak with Bryan. If so, Bob would have to use the office paging system to get hold of him. When he asked me that question, at that moment, I would [normally] have signed, "Yes." Thank God, I changed my mind and started spelling, "Y-E-S." What happened was, I started spelling, "Y-E-S," and with my eyes, my deaf eyes, I was able to measure the timing [of the reaction]. With TTY – with text – you can't [do that]. That's been a struggle for 18 years. At the moment that I spelled, "Y-E" – I hadn't even finished the "S" yet – I was just starting to form the "S." Bob was off like a shot. I didn't know what happened – suddenly he was gone! That helped lead me to many discoveries and to my study of hearing people's behavior.

I went to a workshop where we sat in a circle and where I could watch everyone. When the workshop was over, all the hearing people immediately left and went back to work, taking care of business. It was "Do it." I would wait until Monday. I call it "Deaf Standard Time." I found that I had to work hard to match their ways. Therefore I know that the TTY and ADA have been a great help with communication but it seems it hasn't changed things enough.

Way back when A.G. Bell invented the telephone for deaf people, it got off-track and hearing people took advantage of his invention. We've been trying to catch up ever since – until 1864 – no, 1964, almost 100 years until TTYs came into being and could be used to tie into phones and make progress. Then DPN [Deaf President Now Movement at Gallaudet University in Washington, DC] happened in 1988, then the ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) was passed, and we were getting closer. Then cell phones raised the bar. The new text pagers are [new technology] for the deaf, but that means that, therefore, we know that VRS is the last...the final attempt to match the pace [of hearing people]. If you cut the funding that will mean slower service.

You know – about deaf professionals and communication in this region – one example, in Feb...no, March, the Maryland State Legislature held a meeting. One person, Yvonne Dunkle, Office of Deaf and Hard of Hearing, addressed the group {and tried to convince them to get a 3rd person for secretarial services. She had experienced communication breakdowns with another

important person where information was missed; communication fell apart; there were many errors.}

{Now, having watched that, my complaint is that the [authorization for the] Office of Deaf and Hard of Hearing was passed last year in May 2002. *That tried since 35 years, try, try, because not enough time is reason not enough time and timing. problem...to...to that...problem without...so wrong.* I spoke to make them understand that *35 years wow worse limit.* Now, if we're without service, the errors will continue for another 35 years. It's hard to get it through the state legislature because of speed and the 90 months [days?] is not enough [because we have to] study the issues now. So we have my complaint that we must keep VRS services fast – with a 15 second answer [speed] to communicate with people.}

My other concern is that I got Sorenson's new VRS VP-100 device last May. I experimented with it and my Comcast high speed cable and last summer enjoyed chatting directly with deaf people in Utah. It was interesting, they wanted to get together to set-up an investment club for money growth. They talked with a person who worked for {an investment tool company.} The group talked with him and he told them that they should not get into investment because [people] talk so fast – it only takes a few seconds – and deaf people are left behind. That's the problem; that's the limitation.

So make sure that VRS keeps full services to help keep us equal to hearing people in investments and things. The problem is keeping up. I hope to be equal but the funny thing, the irony is that Enron collapsed because they moved too fast causing errors and breakdown – but it's interesting.

Another interesting thing, many years ago, I remember using the TTY. I had a hard time trying to communicate with hearing people. I had to tell them, "Hold on...I type slowly." It was so slow. It was tough communicating through the TTY. We could communicate but there was a problem with the TTY device. It was a struggle for years until VRS.

Then communication...one funny thing – I spoke with my daughter in Utah. We chatted and enjoyed our conversation. But one strange thing – I would sign, then when the interpreter [VRS Communications Assistant] came in [interpreting the signs to spoken English and then interpreting the spoken English response into signs], the interpretation went on and on and on. Watching the interpreter was like watching a movie! I waited and waited until it was finally my turn. I responded and then waited and waited again. It was strange. In deaf-to-deaf conversation, it's quick, condensed. But when it's translated [interpreted], it goes on and on, my goodness! Sometimes, it really drags on. It's interesting.

That...but that...my h...my last straw and my last hope is that you keep VRS. And in the future, I hope it will become 3-D and be a better, clearer, way of communicating and interacting with deaf people and hearing interpreters – with hands that enjoy helping deaf people around the US to work to fit in. Increasingly today we have trouble with a lot of deaf workers being laid off – out of problem [work].

It's like the handicapped in wheelchairs that run up against a wall. Like them – we can call it the Movement for Deaf people, our Movement is also up against a wall. Hearing people are ahead

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of us on the other side of the wall and there's a gap between us. Consider helping us to close the gap, to close the gap with sign language.

So, please...so we have...2 months is not enough data. It takes a long time to consider, to get more analysis, and to talk to people all over. We're just starting to put things in place now. We're young [TTY access]; it's only been 100 [years]. We're putting things in place, meeting many people. At the last MDAD meeting, I met 100 people and the numbers are increasing. Now is not the time to cut [funding] after 2 months. You need to extend the time, to consider if you have enough data, if you've talked with enough people, gotten everything together that can help to make the right decision that's best for your...to make [the] right [decision for] equality.

Thank you for listening to my comment.

Good night. Good-bye.

Transcribed by: Helen Chang, RID: CI & CT, Section 504 Officer/Interpreter
 Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau
 Consumer Affairs & Outreach Division

Traci Randolph, RID: CI & CT, SC:L, Interpreter/Disability Policy
Specialist
Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau
Disability Rights Office

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